

**CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND
(ADOPTED 1/10/05)**

PRESENTATION, WORKSESSION & BUDGET WORKSESSION

Monday, April 19, 2004

OFFICIALS PRESENT:

Mayor Porter

Councilmember Austin-Lane

Councilmember Elrich

Councilmember Mizeur

Councilmember Seamens

Councilmember Williams

City Manager Finn

City Clerk / Treasurer Waters

Recreation Director Haiduven

Assistant Recreation Director Corley

Library Director Arnold-Robbins

Public Works Director Lott

Police Chief Creamer

OFFICIALS ABSENT:

Councilmember Barry

The Council convened at 7:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building, 7500 Maple Avenue, Takoma Park, Maryland.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Howard Kohn, President, Community Center Citizens Committee said we have been doing this a long time. He found a document from 2000 from the Program Committee which was a determination after a year of study regarding the basic needs (i.e., rooms for teens, seniors, dance center, performances, gymnasium, meeting and classrooms). After this report was presented, there was a rise and fall of things on this list (additions/deletions). Then the numbers started to come in and we started getting realistic about what we could afford. Many of the add-ons were put on hold, including the gym. But the rest of the list was held as a commitment. When the ribbon is cut, he hopes that it is true to this original concept.

Bill Valdez, Member of Recreation Committee commented it had been a while since he attended a meeting. The original concept of the community center was lean and mean. The bare necessities are still needed. He has been impressed in the City that people are willing to pay for what they feel is necessary. This community would be willing to pay for the bare minimums. Citizens will support taxes when it makes sense. He thinks there would be a fair amount of support to do that if needed. He asked the Council to consider all of the options to make this happen.

Chris Barkley, Co-President, Takoma Foundation remarked that he is a parent of children in the

community. He wants to see the community center whole and complete. Children and seniors should have space in the center when it opens. It is extremely important to have a safe space for children to play and learn right here in the neighborhood. He is committed to raising funds to help furnish the community center. As a parent, he realizes the need. It is time for kids to be able to do things here in the City that they do in other places, and have fun here in a center that is run by our community. The center should be whole and complete (e.g., space, computer lab, meeting rooms for elders to meet, etc.). They need space if they are going to have programming. Residents will pay for what it takes to put it here, but the space has to be here for our residents.

Dallas Birch (?), Member, Programming Committee (Recreation Committee) recognized the tough choices that have to be made, but when talking to some neighbors and families in the area, they want to invest in the building, neighborhood and community. The center is taking on a face of its own. He urged that Council preserve the original elements of the plan that were named—aimed at servicing the young and old.

Tim Dowd, Member, Recreation Committee encouraged the Council to complete the job as it was laid out. They have cut out the gym and nice entry way, but should not cut out the functionality that the center should have. We need the rooms that were planned for the center to be a viable location for residents to use. He asked the Council to think about the amount of time and money that has been required to get to this stage. The remainder is a small fraction of the overall commitment. The Council should finish the job to be sure to have functions and an interior for the building.

Ann Hendricks-Jenkins, Director, Takoma Kids Club and After School Program supports a full community center, as a parent and on behalf of the students she cares for. She read a comment from Karen Mendez who cannot be here tonight. Ms. Hendricks-Jenkins is a parent of young people who participate in City recreation programs. She has two children, the oldest participates actively in the Takoma/Piney Branch center activities. She hopes that the community center is completed in time for her youngest son. The Council should move forward on this structure.

Annie Moser, Hodges Heights and Member, Recreation Committee asked the Council to please maintain the plan vetted by the committee and residents. It has been the hope and anticipation of many that this center would be a gathering place for the diverse community of the City. She has heard some concerns about the holding cells on the main level of the building. She does not think that the community would be more at risk with the cells remaining on the main level. Moving them to the lower level would be costly. She sees some of the concerns about the aesthetics as things that could be put on hold for some time. Yesterday, she heard a conversation at Soccer Plex and the remark that one thing admired about the City is its sense of community. She urged the Council to find the money, even if an additional loan is required.

Mary Stover, Co-President, Takoma Foundation clarified that the foundation volunteered to find money to pay for the furnishings for the center. They have raised more than \$60,000 toward the \$300,000 goal. They have sold bricks. A few donors have contributed dollar amounts. They have packets of the promotional fund raising literature. They still have a lot to do, but the

response has been positive. Residents want a center that is filled with activities (games, mentoring and homework help, art, dance, and other activities for youth, adults and seniors). People want a complete center that functions well. Council should do what is necessary.

Dan Robinson stated that what is lacking, is for everyone in the City to have the opportunity to say what is appropriate to spend on this project. He suggested a ballot question. He believes this should have been done in the past when the project rose to this level of expense. He looks forward to the center being finished and for children/adults being able to use it to its fullest. His second point is about “transparency.” With respect to the amount of space that has been allotted to municipal activities, he has heard three different estimates about the administrative office space.

Wanda Cus-Lorentz, Secretary, Takoma Foundation and Jazz Festival said she was a supporter of the center. It needs to be built with best cohesion. She encouraged the Council taking another bond or borrowing more from stormwater funds. She thinks that the administrative offices should be moved to the upper level as planned, as opposed to leaving administrative offices on the ground floor. There should be a space for kids and seniors. She advises to build sooner than later.

Dave Lorentz, Founder, Jazz Festival noted he has been involved in citizen activities leading up to the community center from the very beginning. He has participated in many committees. He recalled that the original consensus-building process was one of the hardest parts. After a certain point, when the decision to build was made, the process disappeared into the City bureaucracy. We were disappointed and found that decisions were being made that no longer involved some of the committee members. They did not like being cut off in that way after all of the time participating from the start. He would like to see the project stay the course. Borrowing against stormwater seems like a good idea. He said that he and probably the other citizens involved in this project, would like to get back into the process. They offered their assistance.

JoAnna Holtzschneider provided comments about road repairs in the City. Haywood Avenue is the one that is all torn up. Work was scheduled to start on or about March 25. In about two days, there was a big mess. There has been a lot of rain. Sump pumps that were detached to remove the curb were not replaced and were filled with concrete. There are questions about why the work started and stopped. Residents called Public Works to determine what was happening. Answers were not forthcoming. Work started again on Friday (3 week delay). At first, great headway was made. She returned home from work at 3:30 p.m. and most work had stopped. Workers were sitting on stoops, smoking cigarettes and talking on cell phones. Notice was put out to residents that work would be finished tomorrow. She does not think that will occur. There is no acceptable progress today. This raises two interesting/important issues. She is concerned about the quality of work that is being done. Public Works was disrupted. However, efforts should be taken to reduce disruption. A second concern is related to cost. She is interested to know how the contract is set-up. It is her first experience with Public Works. She is concerned about the level of monitoring, cost and quality of work that is offered by Public Works and other City departments.

City Manager Finn said he is not familiar with the specific case described. He will check into it. Our contract is a materials-type of contract. We only pay for it one time. They replace things at their own cost. We have several people, including an engineer who inspects the work. The contractor has a lot of things going on throughout the community at the same time. He will respond to the complaint.

Linda Norgan, 28 year resident said she has raised two children. She is a member of the Takoma Foundation Board. She hopes that the Council goes forward full steam. It can be scary when costs go up, but the Council should move forward and build a real legacy for the community. The Foundation is getting ready to go out and make requests for big donations. Through press statement, she has sensed an ambivalence on the Council to support the project. The Council should speak publicly in support for the project.

Carol Stewart, Central Avenue commented on the trash cans that are back in Sligo Creek Park. Many people are grateful. She encouraged the Council to find a way to finish the community center all at one time. She is a new member of the Takoma Foundation Board. She sees the work that is being put into fund-raising. It is very hard to raise money for a project that seems dead in the water.

Lorraine Pearsall, Vice President, Historic Takoma reminded the Council about the interest in the aesthetics of the project. There was a time when we almost did not have a community center. She recalls a meeting where Larry Abell pulled out a photo of the “Takoma Hotel” (facade characterization) which thrilled people working on the project. It unified people and helped to move the project forward. She recognized the funding concerns. The project looks more like colonial Williamsburg versus our historic community. We have lost an awful lot of the original concept. She asked the Council to find the money to afford (1) window treatments, (2) concrete cornices on the edges of the building, and (3) horizontal bar that runs across the porch. It is in the rendering, but when we look at the elevations this is not included. These are minimal things. We have lost many other things, like the dormers. Buildings are around for a long time. It should symbolize our history and roots. We feel this connection is important. We also think that the programming is important to the community. She recalled all of the discussions. It really was the design that unified the community and brought the project forward. Please consider in your very difficult balancing.

Pam Larsen, Takoma Foundation Board (met many in roles on Community Center Planning Committee and Hodges Heights Association) said we have total faith that the Council will come up with the solution to provide the center that is desired by the community. We are starting to see some community associations come together around the project. She noted a fund-raising event around a wine tasting at Savory on May 16th which is being done in conjunction with the Old Town Business Association (OTBA). There will be a silent auction. This brings the Old Town into the community center orbit in a very positive way. OTBA members had the same positive response to the design and aesthetics of the project. She invited the Council to attend the event.

Mr. Kohn said he noted that Mr. Robinson and his jazz ensemble will be at the silent auction. He responded to Dan's comment about the estimates on the space. He said that Mr. Williams' estimates were based on a 30 page analysis. His own were based on quick estimates. He remarked about the confusion with how the meeting spaces are being counted.

Mr. Robinson expressed thanks to Howard for clarification of the "back of the envelope" calculation. However, he would still ask that Mr. Williams clarify his evaluation of the space. He noted that he may not be present at the silent auction, but there will still be a jazz ensemble performance.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilmember Williams noted that Carol Stewart was recognized by the TPVFD Board for her work in building a bridge between the City Council and the fire department. She upgraded the coordination between the two organizations. That was special enough to be recognized.

PRESENTATION

1. Councilmember Williams' Update on the Community Center Construction Project.

Mr. Williams explained to Dan that he looked at particular office space, room by room. He looked at uses. He did not compare hallways, storage rooms and bathrooms. That may be part of the difference. He tried to just compare office space. He went through and showed specific footage to use in his analysis, and would be happy to provide a little more analysis if desired. There is a community center update page on the City web site with all of his weekly information. He said to Dave Lorentz that he is sorry for any message that people were not to be involved. Despite that message having been received, we are now at point where people, including the Council, are coming back into the process.

He referred to his update report, noting that he has been busy with some personal issues in the past week. Construction Manager George had emergency surgery today, as well. It was a difficult time to pull together information over the past week. He has also been putting some demands on the architect to put together specific information for tonight's agenda item, along with setting other priorities for the architect.

Mr. Williams provided the Council with an update on the finances. The only difference in this version and one a few weeks ago, is a change in the amount of monies that we hope to get from the State (reduced to \$300,000). He increased the amount that we might borrow from stormwater fund from \$200,000 to \$400,000. We continue to find that our costs for the stormwater solution are increasing. He thinks that it would be helpful to keep track of stormwater revenues that might be used to cover the stormwater expenses. On the last page, he attempted to show where we might come up with the monies to cover the stormwater costs. He

has used a working number of about \$1,000,000. It is helpful to track those numbers as separate pieces. Funding is fairly restrictive to use for stormwater costs. Other things, including tonight's information, have taken precedence. Until we get the figures, it will be hard to have a clear sense about how much money we have to work with, both for community center and stormwater pieces. He noted the May 2 deadline for making a decision on whether to go with the "held" price from our contractor on the upstairs work. He has gotten quotes from other contractors. He will have some comparison bids next week.

WORKSESSION

2. Community Center Construction.

Mayor commented that the purpose of the discussion this evening is for the Council to lay out a conceptual plan for the use of remaining monies for the project. She remarked about the increase that has been caused by the stormwater facility. She does not want to see the increase in the cost for this necessary facility to take away from the things that we can do. The stormwater fund needs to pay for this facility. She agreed with Mr. Williams. The goal is to get information about the costs for the interior of the building. With the unknowns, it may be that some of our decisions have to be tentative. However, she encouraged the Council to make as many decisions as possible so that we can move forward next week in the discussion about the hold on the interior renovations.

Mr. Williams noted that part of the money that is in the budget numbers as revenues is \$300,000 that the Council set aside for the upstairs renovations.

Larry Abell, Larry Abell & Associates introduced Doug Norway of his firm and Jeryl DiPietro (Charron Consulting). They will talk about why things are located as they are in the plan and provide the information about the interior space. He has heard many people tonight who participated with us in designing the center. It has been an extraordinary process for us. At one time, there were about 200 people on the committee. He remarked about the performance area, gymnasium, computer learning center and other spaces. They went through a process of trying to accommodate all of the varied needs. As a design firm, we were concerned and felt it was important to communicate with residents and staff to ensure that mistakes were not being made. In terms of the community level and what drove this decision, there were existing conditions on the site (i.e., library, adjacent school, parking, pedestrian traffic). We had to go through a mandatory referral process with the County. There were many considerations. We had an internal circulation that brought children over from the school to the library (through the building). This led us to attempt to drop the passage down to a lower level. He said that the point at the end of the atrium was a very important point in the layout. At one time there was an effort to put the community center component over the roof to the rear. However, there was not sufficient structure to support it. It was not feasible. As we looked at all of the different activities, it became obvious that the chosen layout would work well. He provided examples. There were several locations on the site that could accommodate a variety of activities. We then

translated the activity needs into the layout both horizontally and vertically. He commented on how the current building layout set the basis for the schematics. It was desirable to have a drop-off space and a gathering area in the rear of the building.

Some of the things that drove decisions not to put group activities on the third level, is that they would have to increase the bathrooms, corridors, circulation, elevator, etc. We were actually reducing its need to accommodate large loads. We were trying to keep costs in mind as we proceeded. The hours of operation for the offices tend to be from 8:00-5:00. There are varying hours of operation in the community center. It was easier to control/secure the upper level and cut off the HVAC in the off-hours. There are construction and design impacts about some of the decisions.

Jeryl DiPetro, Charron Consulting (hired by City to help with construction management) wanted to speak about the impact of changing the community center from main to upper level. The cost for the architectural portion would increase. You would have to start over with a bid process for design. Once that is all done, a general contractor would walk in and say that with enough time and money they could do anything. Right now, you will get a credit back from Knott Construction, but you will be lucky to get \$0.50 on the dollar as a credit. Then you will turn around and get a new contractor on board or you will go back to Knott and start this part of the project from new plans. It will cost a lot more (e.g., designs, permitting, etc.).

Councilmember Austin-Lane gave clarification about her earlier comments.

Ms. DiPetro questioned whether the Council is now talking about leaving the main level as the administrative area and moving the community center to the upstairs.

Mr. Williams gave further clarification.

Ms. Porter said if we do something other than the general overall design that is on the table, it will cost us more to do redesign work. Right now, we have a plan on the table that is out to nine additional contractors. Knott came in at \$331,000. There is hope that we will have another contractor who will come in at lower bid. If Council decides to change things around, it would create significant additional costs. There have been suggestions made that we might be able to save money if we were to change the basic design.

Ms. Austin-Lane asked who said this in public session.

Councilmember Seamens said he supports the community center project. He raised the question that may have gotten morphed into this discussion, by expressing his concern about design changes. He saw what he thought was a significant increase in government administrative space use. He raised his concern along with looking at the current economic situation in the country. He has had residents talk to him about their frustration that the gym may not be developed.

Ms. Porter said she would not make the assumption that the gym will not happen.

Mr. Seamens said he has heard discussions about plan changes to try to save money. He said that he suggested that there might be a way to look at this master plan as a phased implementation plan. He asked a question about how we as a community could work within current means to use community space that is built in new portions of the construction and keep administrative offices where they are currently located. We need to complete the contract that we have in place and meet commitments. However, there are enough things on the table that Council needs to resolve. He is hesitant to spend other dollars until some of the current things are resolved. We need a plan about how to get where we want to be.

Ms. Porter said she disagrees that we have all the time in the world. Knott is holding a contract for \$331,000 for the upstairs space. If we give that up without knowing the options on that, we may incur significant additional costs.

Ms. Austin-Lane said, in response to Mr. Seamens comments, we should assume that we are still on track with the Council's direction on the design of the project (as stated in public session). She stated that we are on board with the base contract. Now is the time to decide on things to do over and above.

Councilmember Elrich said the "over and above" that we have to talk about tonight are the renovations of the main and top floors. We can wait to discuss the facade. We need to deal with decisions about the main and top floor renovations. There will be added expenses. We need to go forward on the renovation of the second floor as envisioned. We should either go with the Knott contract or one of the other contractors. We need to get the upper floor completed. Then we need to decide whether to build the gym or facade first. Both are significant expenses. That is a discussion for the Council and community. We do not have a lot of wiggle room in terms of doing the second floor.

Mr. Abell apologized for any confusion. There was a very valid reason for doing the things that we did. He was hopeful that by reviewing some of the history, it would renew the information about why the decisions were made the way that they were. Those in the audience who participated in the process will recognize the history as recounted. The space analysis that was done as part of the community group is slightly different than what you do to submit building plans. People are comparing different types of plans when evaluating square footage. The Building Code gives very specific definitions about how to categorize space, largely due to fire regulations. You have to go back to the basics of how different spaces are defined. Some spaces may have mixed use. He thinks that Mr. Williams' analysis is pretty good.

Ms. Porter confirmed that the reason that things were classified on the architectural plans were dictated by Fire Code definitions.

Mr. Seamens said he appreciates the clarification. He does not think the square footage remains a big issue, but it did increase his concern because residents have a strong desire to increase space for youth and seniors.

Doug Norway, Larry Abell & Associates said he has been asked to explore the optional layout for the interior that would stay along the lines of what was originally proposed which might reduce costs. These options were derived from discussions with staff and some residents. He described the lower level of the building. The new addition will accommodate the police department with the exception of the holding cells. There will be a large atrium area that will be available for community gatherings and art displays. There will be a delivery area and utility area. There will be “shell” space constructed for future relocation of the holding cells. There is an area that is being constructed for support to the upper levels (structural, unbuilt space), part of the master plan for the future build out. He explained the lower level support that is needed in the first Phase of the project to support the ground level plaza and facade.

Mr. Williams said the big concrete roof is going out to hold up the top of the wall that is helping to hold the flood gate.

Mr. Seamens asked how vehicles will circulate in the turn-around space between the library and the municipal building.

Mr. Norway responded. It will be built to code to allow for turn around. He continued with an explanation of the optional main level design (largely, keeping the master plan intact). In order to move the holding cells downstairs, there would be other code requirements that would have to be met which would be costly. The cafeteria, kitchen and child care rooms have been removed from this plan.

Ms. Porter asked whether the kitchen/cafeteria be moved into the current holding cell space, if the cells are later moved downstairs when the gym is built.

Mr. Norway replied that at some point, a dining area and some sort of a kitchen could be put back into the design.

Mr. Elrich asked whether it would work to put the cafeteria/kitchen into the Miscellaneous room which is doubling as a Council chambers.

Mr. Abell explained that the “cafeteria” was thought to be a place where residents and/or staff could sit and have informal communications. It was not intended to provide a full-time staff and kitchen. The idea was that it could also be an overflow area where TV monitors would be located (e.g., people could watch performances and Council meetings from a different room). It is an important space. However, he recognized that the teen program is a priority.

Mr. Elrich inquired as to whether it is feasible to use the proposed Council chambers (without kitchen) for the informal sitting area. He would rather that the Council remain in this room for meetings versus spending additional money to outfit another Council room.

Mr. Abell said it was set-up to have more than one type of activity. It is an area in a location to accommodate many types of activities.

Ms. Porter remarked that the Council established early on that all of the spaces in the center would be multi-functional. One of the things that the community wanted was to make the current Council Chambers available for performances and other uses. Council could move to allow for maximum use of space in the building. We want to make rooms that have maximum flexibility.

Mr. Norway added there will be equipment in the multi-purpose room. This means the chambers could then be put to better uses.

Ms. Porter noted that Mr. Williams suggested that a modular dias could be built to be used in either this room or the multi-purpose room.

Mr. Kohn recalled when the gym was removed from the first phase, the citizens wanted the dias removed from this room and for the fixtures in the multi-purpose room to remain movable.

Mr. Norway described the upper level design that remains the same in both options. There is some community space in the atrium. The administrative staff offices include two public meeting rooms. He said that the upper level is probably the first area that should be renovated to enable administrative offices to move upstairs. This will reduce from 3 to 2 the mechanicals for the upstairs.

Mr. Williams noted that there are currently staff located in small office spaces upstairs—office space that people may not even recognize.

Mr. Seamens had a question about the mechanical systems upstairs. If renovations of the upstairs were delayed, would it be a lower cost because new systems would not be required?

Mr. Norway responded in the negative.

Mr. Williams said a lot of the equipment is at the end of its useful life.

Mr. Norway noted that the rear exterior wall is not insulated. The proposed upgrades would help the functions of the two systems that would remain upstairs.

Mr. Seamens reminded of early discussions, the concerns about the stairwell and back walls. The back wall is not a load bearing wall. The crack in the stairwell has been monitored and has not changed since construction has been taking place.

Mr. Norway said the \$331,000 Knott proposal was reduced to about \$200,000 (Abell estimate in the beginning). He referred to the presentation manuals distributed to Council a couple of weeks ago. He noted the cost estimates (low to mid-range costs). He remarked about Option B to relocate the holding cells downstairs, which would cost more. This could be a modification for the future.

Mr. Seamens said the best we could do now in terms of locating the holding cells downstairs would be to cram them into a space that is too small to support the operation. We will further build-out when the gym is built which would add support space to the holding cells.

Mr. Norway commented that if the Council were to proceed with moving the cells downstairs at this time, you would probably want to reconfigure when the gym is built and there is more space.

Ms. Porter referred to Mr. Williams' numbers presented tonight. She noted Mr. Norway's range estimates. It looks like Option B (holding cells moved downstairs) will not be affordable. Option A would be affordable if it were closer to the low end of the range, as presented.

Mr. Williams asked, with respect to the Option A figures, if we need to add permit and redesign fees.

Mr. Norway replied in the affirmative.

Mr. Williams asked whether the additional costs might be in the range of \$40,000.

Mr. Abell said it would be more like \$20,000-25,000.

Mr. Elrich said, clearly, Option B does not work. He would like to see what types of bids we get next week. If they come out significantly better, we might rebid the work on this main level. The holding cells move and a lot of the outside amenities do not fit in the project right now.

Ms. Porter said we would end up with a usable building with all of the basic stuff on this level and administrative offices upstairs. The holding cells would stay on this level until the time that the gym is built. She asked for Council's consensus on the basic plan described by Mr. Norway--leaving the holding cells in place and then looking at the impact of the bids that come in next week.

Mr. Seamens said he appreciates work of the architects, Mr. Williams and the residents. He thanked them for looking at ways to afford the project. He is not ready to vote tonight, but is comfortable with what has been stated.

Councilmember Mizeur said she was slightly confused. She wants to clarify that the plans described this evening are the same as what was presented in materials a couple of weeks ago.

Mr. Seamens said, at some point, we have to think about how we move forward and build the gym.

Ms. Porter noted we promised the community that we would build a workable community center. It is important to recognize that this floor is the most accessible. In order to make maximum use of this floor it is necessary to move the administrative offices upstairs. She is very much in support of this approach.

Mr. Elrich said, in that regard, he thinks he wants to support Mr. Seamens comments, as well. This project was largely sold based on the construction of a gym. It was almost the most critical function of the project. At some point, we need to think about how to add that as a component. Without the gym, this is not what people thought they were getting.

Ms. Porter responded that she did not disagree. The gym was very important at the time and continues to be important. She has been lobbying the State and County Councilmembers for more funds. We will continue to raise money until we get the gym constructed.

Mr. Williams added his agreement. We have consensus on where we are going with the process for main and second floor. What is sense of time frame on the resolution of the Pending Change Orders?

Ms. Porter asked if the Council can get the price figures by next week.

Mr. Abell responded in the negative. This is a negotiation process.

Mr. Seamens said, if we decide not to go with the Knott bid, we do not have to make a decision on one of the others next week. The new bidders have to hold bids for 60 days.

Ms. Porter commented we would have to make the decision in 60 days.

Mr. Norway clarified that Knott did not re-bid the option.

Ms. Porter stated Council has indicated an interest with the next item as renovation of the interior of this building. We should have a better sense of the costs and revenues next week. At that point, we will be required to make a decision about whether to go with the Knott contract for \$331,000. We would then discuss how to proceed with the upstairs and main level. We will discuss the revenues.

Mr. Seamens said we are not predicting how the revenues will be determined. At this point, we are not voting on expenditures or the revenues.

Ms. Austin-Lane clarified that we are not deciding next week on anything other than whether to go with the Knott contract.

Mr. Finn replied that if the Council decides to go with the Knott bid, then it will have to make a decision to spend the monies.

BREAK - The Council took a brief recess at 9:57 p.m. and then reconvened.

3. Community Center Programming.

Mr. Finn started by saying, this is a real quick overview of the community costs for FY05. The Recreation Department will be doing certain functions, and the Library will be working to implement some functions of the learning center. The library is already doing some of these functions on a limited basis with a couple of existing computers. Departmental directors are working together to put together a plan which is very preliminary at this time.

Recreation Director Haiduven referred to the estimated costs in the budget for the computer learning center and the recreation activities for the community center. She made assumptions knowing that this could be more/less than the actual. Staff used a January 1, 2005 start date for the purpose of this budget. She has been working with the Library and have visited some other sites to view activities. She pointed out the concept of contractors. It will be helpful to have this half-year period as a trial to better determine future budgets of the operation. She noted the estimated budget (\$89,000 new dollars; some offset by revenues).

Ms. Mizeur asked whether there is there an assumption that the Takoma Foundation fund-raising efforts for furnishings will be realized.

Ms. Haiduven responded in the affirmative.

Mr. Elrich said this is about twice as much as originally estimated.

Ms. Haiduven referred to the 2001 estimate of \$221,000 for a year.

Ms. Austin-Lane noted that we are now at \$260,000.

Ms. Haiduven commented on the impact of not having the gym as a staffing impact. If it were still in the project, we would have moved some programs entirely into the gym and no longer in rented school space from ICB.

Ms. Austin-Lane asked about the estimate for additional staff for the gym.

Ms. Haiduven responded one person (about \$52,000). We have to realize that we would have more revenues from programs. This is a moving target.

Mr. Finn commended Ms. Haiduven and Ms. Arnold-Robbins for their work. They have reallocated funds from the library over to the community center and other operating costs in recreation. When you see the overall proposed budget, you will see that the effects are very small.

Mr. Seamens thanked them for their work. Did you look at programming at the same time you did this? Will that be part of the budget presentation? He wants to see the programs that will be in the various rooms.

Ms. Haiduven said she can provide that information.

Mr. Seamens commented from earlier conversation, it seems that we are getting closer to knowing the types of rooms that will be in the community center (as relates to identifying programs). He commented on the concerns about accommodations for residents who cannot afford fee-based programs.

Ms. Haiduven noted that the scholarship program is not a cost to be budgeted. It is a non-budgeted revenue item.

4. Street Sweeping Program.

Public Works Director Lott reported on a discussion he had last Summer with Mr. Finn about a standardized street sweeping program. He briefed Mr. Finn on this in December. We were prepared to implement the plan in January but were unable to get the discussion on the Council's agenda. Mr. Lott suggested a systematic sweep of all streets for 7 months of the year (Jan-Aug), curb to curb, including the business areas. He noted the benefits. He could absorb this program into our current operations, but in order to set this up, will need additional monies for signs and sign posts (\$16,110). It would pretty much take up the time of the right-of-way division staff. He commented on the intended placement of the signs that would be kept at a minimum. It would be imperative to have residential compliance.

Ms. Austin-Lane said she has not heard people saying that the streets need to be swept. She has heard comments about sidewalks having debris and broken glass. She does not think that creating this type of inconvenience speaks to the issue of beautification.

Mr. Lott mentioned there was a request by the City Manager to develop the program. He commented on the proximity to the creek and the run-off issues. This is not uncommon in urban areas.

Mr. Finn explained we are not sweeping 30-40% of debris due to parked cars. It is an environmental and City image issue. We are asking for agreement to allow the drivers to be more efficient in their operation. He noted the EPA requirements to prevent debris from entering water system.

Ms. Mizeur asked for information on current street sweeping.

Mr. Lott replied there is no advance notice to residents. The sweeper goes down each street about twice a month. This would give us an opportunity to establish a standard structure for street sweeping. We could do a better job in this operation. He thinks that residents will eventually move their cars.

Ms. Porter asked what happens when a person does not move his car.

Mr. Lott replied that we could ticket or give notice to persons to move cars.

Mr. Finn said the practice is to first-time flyer vehicles in violation with notice. In a second instance, we could cite.

Ms. Porter commented that on some streets, there is not enough room for all cars to park on one side.

Mr. Finn said we are only talking about once a month that people would have to remember a specific day. We would evaluate each street and possibly, not sweep the adjacent side streets to allow for parking overflow.

Mr. Seamens expressed thanks to Mr. Lott for the proposal and for continuing to look at ways to improve services. He wonders how the department can absorb this program in an already tight operation. He recognized the environmental concern. How does this compare to current operations?

Mr. Lott said this would provide more sweeping to residents, and provide a better ability to manage staff. We can shift the emphasis on certain services to focus on a certain period for the sweeping operation.

Mr. Seamens asked how the additional debris will be factored into the plan.

Mr. Lott said it can be managed through our sanitation disposal services.

Mr. Seamens said his concern is with personnel. Hopefully, they would be doing something else if not sweeping streets.

Mr. Lott said he thinks that the division can take on another task. They would then spend September and October to refocus on parks. In late Fall, they would use the sweeper to vacuum storm drains.

Mr. Seamens said he knows that there are a lot of things on the Public Works plate of activities and some do not get addressed now (e.g., debris and glass on sidewalks, overhanging vegetation).

Mr. Lott restated how staff would be assigned to cover the program.

Ms. Mizeur echoed some of Mr. Seamens' initial questions about increasing work load and absorbing the cost. It seems that would be difficult without additional operational costs. In a budget like we have now where we are looking at cutting costs, there is concern about adding a service. It seems that in addition to the signs, there would be costs associated with updates and notices that are not included here. She said that she most often recognizes debris in streets after trash pick-up. Another approach might be to work more with the sanitation crews to better

contain and dispose of trash during the collection process. Another creative way to look at this is to manage storm drains differently (e.g., netting over drain entrance). She echoed the Mayor's concern about the configuration of the proposed zones and the impact on residential parking.

Mr. Williams said he was encouraged when he saw this plan because he thought it would be a good thing to do. On the commercial schedule, he asked that the Carroll Avenue stretch be from Lee to Maple. He commented on the alternate side parking and that it would require more public education (i.e., informing residents that while they cannot park on one side of the street, they can park on the opposite side for the day).

Ms. Mizeur said she was always encouraged by interesting ways to do City services, but when they involve more hassle to residents and additional costs (even small), she would like more time to dialogue with residents.

Mr. Lott expressed that he was just waiting for Council direction. There is no definite time frame.

Ms. Mizeur noted that she lives on Hayward. She met with a couple of residents this evening who are frustrated with some of the roadwork in the Ward. She thinks that to add this hassle on top of the roadwork frustrations might not be the best use of time.

Ms. Austin-Lane seconded Ms. Mizeur's comments. She feels that in Ward 1 there is a lot that we have on our plate that the community is waiting for answers about. She would prefer to delay this until after the August recess, after the new City Manager comes on and the budget is passed.

Ms. Mizeur said, if we had to add parking restrictions in Ward 2 on top of streets being disrupted because of street work, she envisions a huge nightmare.

Mr. Elrich said he thinks that notification is an issue, but he is not sure of the need to wait until the end of August. On the street repair issue, if we do what we need to do, street repairs will be with us for a while.

Ms. Porter said there are two issues: (1) money and (2) inconvenience. She is a little uncomfortable dealing with this outside of the context of the budget. She wants to deal with it in the budget presentation. It gives a little more time to discuss the proposal with residents. If we do go forward with this, we should do a City-wide notice (e.g., letter). For the first 6-12 months, she would suggest that we do not ticket anyone. She recommends that we only issue reminders.

Mr. Seamens agreed with Ms. Porter. He is not prepared tonight to give a go-ahead. He is looking for things that we cannot do, not necessarily looking for new services. He does not see it as a pressing issue.

Ms. Austin-Lane expressed appreciation for Mr. Lott's thinking about debris and the things that

people complain about. She suggested that the right-of-way team focus on sidewalks and respond to calls about clean-up. Already, she gets many complaints about signs--any new signs should be attractive to communities. If we were to mail something to residents' homes at this time, they would probably want most to know about the community center.

Mr. Elrich said he gets lots of questions about things other than the community center. People are interested in general life questions. He suggested that Mr. Lott put something in the *Newsletter* and solicit comments on the proposal.

Ms. Porter agreed that it would be a good idea.

Mr. Seamens commented that he understands that officers are using personal vehicles for patrol. Are we having a problem with vehicle maintenance?

Mr. Lott replied in the negative. We have one vehicle with a blown engine. We have a good maintenance record. There is no backlog of maintenance.

Mr. Williams asked of Ms. Austin-Lane, whether her residents expect Public Works to come and pick up broken glass on sidewalks.

Ms. Austin-Lane observed that she has seen the debris first-hand on some of the major pedestrian walkways.

Ms. Porter concluded that the Council is not willing to move forward at this point but will take it up as part of overall budget discussion. In the interim, she would support Mr. Elrich's suggestion about an article in the *Newsletter*.

5. Presentation of Potential Savings and Corresponding Reductions in Services.

- Police Department

Chief Creamer said the vast majority of Police Department services are essential. She referred to the list of potential service reductions and described each.

Mr. Elrich asked how much reduction in insurance cost is associated with accreditation.

Chief Creamer replied she was not sure.

Mr. Elrich expressed he thought there was a person associated with accreditation.

Chief Creamer said that officer has retired. She has moved the function to another person. She continued the summary of items with comments on eliminating the dispatch function and criminal investigations, both involving a host of issues.

Ms. Austin-Lane asked, regarding the Victim/Witness Services item, if it is included in the previous item. Does the County rebate assume that we are doing victim/witness services?

Chief Creamer responded in the negative.

Mr. Elrich asked, if the County does not give us a rebate for dispatch services, why would we have to negotiate with the County.

Mr. Finn replied that the negotiation would deal with how it is transitioned to the County.

Chief Creamer added that there are Union positions. There are other duties that dispatchers perform that the County would have to assume.

Mr. Elrich asked if the County dispatchers perform the same services.

Chief Creamer responded in the negative. That is a service performed by their 24 hour records clerks. Under this proposal, we would not have enough people to work around the clock to do this reporting. The officers would continue to work 24 hours and the County would dispatch us. This is a service that we provide directly to residents. The County uses a telephone reporting unit. There is a reduction taken out of our police rebate each year because we do not have a telephone reporting unit.

Mr. Elrich asked, in the off hours, how many officers are on the street.

Chief Creamer replied, a minimum of three patrol officers, with one dispatcher. There is a shift supervisor who might be one of the patrol officers on duty.

Mr. Elrich asked how many investigators we have.

Chief Creamer explained that she would not count victim services because it is a civilian position. There are a total of eight positions, one of which we are proposing to be frozen in FY05 (delayed hiring). You would keep four positions and get rid of three positions. We have two vacancies in addition to the IAD/EEO position. There is no supervisor in this division because of a recent retirement. The County has indicated that if they were to assume this service, they would only need one investigator. She does not know how this could happen effectively.

Mr. Elrich asked if we would really lose the whole rebate.

Chief Creamer replied in the affirmative. She referred to the rebate formula. It is tricky. They have recently tinkered with the formula.

Ms. Porter asserted that hopefully, the recent actions to change the formula will be reversed.

Chief Creamer agreed.

Mr. Elrich observed that the County is not rebating the City for all of the costs associated with our investigations services. Since the County is not rebating us for the SAT team and drug task force, why not give it back to the County?

Chief Creamer said that this has not been the position in the past. We cannot simply drop this service.

Mr. Elrich said with no rebate, they are saying that the City should not be providing this service.

Chief Creamer clarified that prior to last year, the formula had been arbitrary. Most recently, we have improved on the “open door” discussion of the formula. There are other things that are not included, like communications. She is not sure of the effectiveness of calling the County and telling them that they have to pick up one or more of our services. It comes down to dollars. They have indicated in the past that if they were to assume our dispatch function, they would continue our dispatch on the Silver Spring channel.

Mr. Elrich said we are trying to figure out some of the budget issues. Like the Public Works presentation, some of this stuff stands out like a sore thumb. We should go to the County, acknowledge that they are not giving us a rebate, and ask when they are then going to take over the service.

Ms. Mizeur said the perfect time to do that is when we cannot perform the service because we do not have the positions filled.

Ms. Porter replied she thinks that we all know how the County will respond. They will say “okay” and then not do anything.

Mr. Seamens noted that the word on the street is that drug enforcement on the other side of Flower Avenue is non-existent.

Chief Creamer said if there are any items on the list that you want to move forward with, especially with respect to communications and CID, we need to discuss your expectations. We need to decide what it is that we will continue to provide before sitting down with the County. A major issue on the part of the County will be our records management system. There may be some secondary demands that they make (e.g., we have to convert to their records management system).

Ms. Mizeur asked whether the County’s service would meet our requirements in terms of the victim/witness services position and the comment that it fills an accreditation requirement.

Chief Creamer replied we would have to indicate that the County police department provides the service without affecting accreditation.

Ms. Austin-Lane inquired whether suspending the DARE training, officers would be restricted from having contact with youth.

Chief Creamer replied in the negative. Each of the sector specialists have picked up this youth function. Of the four DARE instructors, only one is on the COPS team. The other three are assigned to the patrol function.

Ms. Austin-Lane raised a point regarding special events support. The \$38,000 is higher than what she anticipated. Is it confirmed that the festival organizers who are clearing a profit are not paying for these services from the City?

Chief Creamer replied in the affirmative. The 4th of July celebration is the largest of these costs. Everyone is required to work. This also includes the other public events (e.g., Jazz Fest, Taste of Takoma, Street Festival, 4th of July, Folk Festival).

Ms. Austin-Lane referred to the nuisance abatement position, noting it is a fairly new position. She is starting to see the tickets from parking enforcement and to hear the complaints that go along with the tickets. Are the other responsibilities for this position working well?

Chief Creamer replied we are transitioning him into this position. She commented on some of the speciality training associated with noise and animal complaints. The officer does not yet have the animal expertise.

Ms. Austin-Lane seconded the request for finding out the total for the 10% reduction in insurance costs associated with accreditation. Regarding the separate reporting system that we have, are we making a transition to the County's reporting system?

Chief Creamer said the County is trying to identify an appropriate vendor for their RMS. It is a project that has been in the works for a long time (since 2000). Technology continues to change. We have money set aside to mirror their system when a decision is made.

Ms. Austin-Lane said this is a tough discussion. She would want to prioritize that if there is any downsizing--that it be done through discussions with the County so that our qualified staff are moved over to continue their function. It worked well with code enforcement.

Chief Creamer noted we are the only full service police department in the County. If we were to have the County pick-up some of the larger functions, we would no longer be a full service department. This would have an impact on the ability to recruit and retain officers. There are opportunities here that officers seek which may be more difficult to achieve at the County level.

Ms. Porter said, in terms of the dispatch function, she remembers going to the County's dispatch center, and it was apparent that during busy times they get calls from all over the County. She was afraid that during busy times, if certain types of calls were ranked on the County scale, they would not get to the call for a period of time (e.g., suspicious people).

Chief Creamer admitted there are a lot of factors involved. Dispatchers triage the calls as they come in and prioritize the calls for service. Those that are not life threatening or do not have immediate property damage implications, would be a lower response. All calls would be dispatched by the County. The bulk of calls for service would be routed through the County ECC. They do not dispatch every single call for service. They have a telephone recording unit. It would not have the same level of response as we have with City service.

Ms. Porter said in terms of investigations, she understands that there is a certain level of minor crimes that the County does not even begin to investigate.

Chief Creamer agreed.

Ms. Porter inquired about the County's level of crimes worthy of investigation.

Chief Creamer responded that all of the Part I offenses are assigned for further follow-up, and that she cannot answer with certainty about the Part II offenses.

Ms. Porter said she would like more information. It will be critical to know the level of service that the City could expect from the County.

Mr. Seamens said he recognized that this was difficult to put together. He thanked Chief Creamer for her work. Do we have officers who do not have vehicles?

Chief Creamer said she did do not know. There was an incident at shift change that may have tied up officers at the same time there was a suspicious death in a home. She was not aware of any vehicle or maintenance problems. She will look into that question.

Mr. Seamens stated that over the past several years there have been many open positions in the Police Department. You and the previous Chief have often had to cover services with short staff. In preparing this document, did you give any thought to how you would staff the department and fulfill services with a reduction in the workforce that is not filling the vacant positions? You have done the job short-handed. If we were to now cut the workforce by uniform positions, is that a savings and is it workable?

Chief Creamer said, as previously stated, she would have to be clear about the Council and community expectations for services. It boils down to what the community expects. The position that we have not filled include the IAD/EEO (has been vacant and is now frozen). The other two positions are on the drug and SAT Team. This has resulted in the other officers in this area having to pick-up these responsibilities. If we were to get rid of the three vacant positions, unless we were to turn over the functions of these positions to the County, the remaining officers would have to assume the responsibilities.

Mr. Seamens said there are some things (levels of service) that we provide that the County does not. Even if we keep the business in-house, we might be able to reduce our service levels to that

of the County to realize a savings.

Mr. Elrich requested the staffing plan from when we had the 37 officers (prior to the 4 member grant team). How did we manage our full-service department at that time? This would be helpful in understanding our choices in terms of reductions (knowing what we did with fewer officers).

Chief Creamer said she could provide that information. She reminded that they still have a Patrol Division that is working 12-hour shifts. She had a Union member come to her and ask when she thought they will get off the 12-hour shift.

Mr. Elrich confirmed that the department did not always have 12 hour shifts.

Chief Creamer replied, noting that when she first came on with the City (19-21 years old), there were 12-hour shifts. She will have to go back and take a look at when changes were implemented. She got the extra four officers through the Department of Justice COPS grant, due in large part to the response to the community's desire for COP.

Ms. Mizeur said in general, that she would support the possibility of a community forum on policing expectations.

Mr. Elrich agreed.

Ms. Porter clarified that Ms. Mizeur is asking for something more comprehensive than the budget discussion.

Ms. Mizeur further clarified that in her election campaign, she found this question to be the most frequent (i.e., appropriate balancing mix and services in this department).

Ms. Austin-Lane said she agrees that it is important that the community is well aware of the discussion if we do consider any of these changes. Citizens want to comment after hearing a briefing and discussions. Maybe, we can structure the agenda so that people can comment after hearing the remarks.

Ms. Porter replied that if the Council wants to approach the discussion in that manner, then she can work on the schedule. Right now, the problem is with the competing items on the agenda.

ADJOURNMENT

The Council adjourned for the evening at 11:48 p.m.